

NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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BUSH ADMINISTRATION ENDS NUCLEAR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Rep. Markey asks why only independent oversight of nation's nuclear weapons terminated

WASHINGTON, DC- Representative Edward Markey (D-MA), Co-Chair of the Bipartisan Taskforce on Nonproliferation and a Senior Member of the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Select Committee on Homeland Security today released a letter to Secretary of Energy Abraham Spencer, questioning the Department of Energy's decision to terminate the National Nuclear Security Administration's Advisory Committee.

"Nuclear bombs are the most devastating weapon ever invented." Rep. Markey said. "Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has struggled to determine the proper role of the nuclear weapons in our arsenal. However, instead of seeking balanced expert advice and analysis about this important topic, the Department of Energy has disbanded the one forum for honest, unbiased external review of its nuclear weapons policies."

The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), which is part of the Department of Energy, is responsible for the safety, reliability and performance of the nuclear weapons stockpile, including the ability to design, produce, and test nuclear devices. The NNSA Advisory Committee was created by then-NNSA Administrator John Gordon in June, 2001 to "review the ... NNSA research and development portfolio and make strategic recommendations for strengthening NNSA leadership and science and technology." The Advisory Committee was comprised of nuclear weapons experts both inside and outside of government. Further, neither pro- nor anti- nuclear ideology dominated the panel. Created under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), committee meetings were, when possible, open to the public.

However, the Advisory Committee has not met since May, 2002, even though the committee charter called for an on-going oversight role for the Committee. Further, the Committee never publicly released copies of the report it produced despite the fact that under FACA, all such committees must release copies of any reports, where possible, and send copies of such reports to the Library of Congress. Finally, FACA requires that the dissolution of an Advisory Committee be announced in the Federal Register; the NNSA Advisory Committee was dissolved via an email to the committee members, without any formal publication of this dissolution notice.

Rep. Markey concluded, "The Bush Administration is considering policy changes that will alter the role of nuclear weapons in national defense, including possible pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons. It is also considering the role of nuclear weapons in deterring not only nuclear weapons attacks, but also biological and chemical weapons. It is reviewing the size of the nuclear weapons stockpile, the need for new nuclear weapons such as the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator or weapons with yields of less than 5 kilotons, and a possible return to nuclear testing. Given the importance and sheer complexity of the issues raised by each of these questions, why was the only independent contemplative body studying nuclear weapons disbanded – and disbanded in such a surreptitious fashion?"

Additional information is available at Rep. Markey's website, <http://www.house.gov/markey>.

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